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A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #41

FEB 14 '76 July 23, 1976

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET TAX EXPENDITURES TASK FORCE.....The Assistant Secretary for Administration appeared before the Committee on July 20, to express the opposition of USDA to the exclusion of "off-budget" activities from the Federal budget. He indicated that the policy of exempting certain outlays disguises the true level of Government expenditures and clouds the impact of the Government on the economy. The USDA position is in accord with the objectives of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974. The Rural Telephone Bank and Rural Electrification and Telephone Revolving Fund are the two USDA programs that are exempt from inclusion in the Federal budget. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

END-OF-YEAR EMPLOYMENT CEILING.....The Department was 219 under the ceiling for permanent full-time employees as of June 30. In the "all other" category, the ceiling was exceeded by 6,429. Some agencies exceeded the ceiling on the basis of adequate justification or emergencies. In other cases, agencies simply did not manage or control their ceilings. OMB Circular A-64 requires the Department to justify any excesses.

No ceilings have been established for the transition period, but all agencies should plan and manage their employment levels on a continuing basis to ensure that the year-end employment ceiling is not exceeded in September, 1977. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

FISCAL YEAR 1977 APPROPRIATIONS.....The Agriculture and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill for FY 77, which was signed into law July 12, provides for a net increase of \$74.6 million in budget authority for USDA above the President's Budget request.

The net increase, however, includes major program increases of \$715 million. This was offset by financing changes, principally a failure to restore \$640 million in CCC losses. The bill also provides for increased loan levels:

Housing loans	\$995 million
Water and sewer loans	139 "
Farm ownership loans	100 "
Pollution abatement loans ..	50 "

The Conference Report on the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill for FY 77 provides for Forest Service increases of approximately \$26 million in budget authority and \$98 million in program level. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

EXCESS TELEPHONES.....Agency efforts to date have resulted in the removal of 677 telephones in the metropolitan D.C. area for an annual savings of \$135,466. A current inventory will be furnished by GSA within the next two weeks and will be analyzed for further reductions. (Contact: Bill Roth, 00, ext. 75225)

TELEPHONES.....Many private firms have established procedures for auditing their telephone billings. These audits have uncovered instances of significant overcharges for equipment and service. Efforts are underway to locate a technically qualified consultant firm to spot check USDA telephone systems and billings. An audit system and employee training program will be developed so that USDA can review telephone billings on a continuous basis. (Contact: Bill Roth, 00, ext. 75225)

GSA SPACE ASSIGNMENT RECORDS - FEDERAL BUILDINGS FUND - A GSA-USDA Task Force has been established to identify the causes of inaccurate GSA Federal Buildings Fund (FBF) billings. GSA will furnish copies of current space assignment records to the agencies for their verification. This is scheduled to be completed by October 1. In the meantime, the Task Force will be working on resolving the problem of the backlog of outstanding requests for corrections to FBF billings. With assignments verified and outstanding errors corrected, the accuracy of the billings should improve dramatically. (Contact: Bill Roth, 00, ext. 75225)

WASHINGTON SPACE CONSOLIDATION UPDATE.....Since January 1976, much has taken place in the Washington space program. Major actions and measurable savings as a result of this program are as follows:

Actions Completed

- ...Recaptured space in Auditors Building from ASCS and assigned to FNS. ASCS consolidated in existing assignment. Annual cost avoidance of \$160,778 based on eliminating 23,540 square feet at \$6.83 per square foot.
- ...First phase of AMS consolidation completed February 1976, with return of Grain Division from Hyattsville, Maryland.
- ...GSA space consultant contract has been advertised. Award date scheduled by July 23, 1976.

Actions Underway

- ...Six agencies to be consolidated by September 1, 1976.
- ...Attic and sub-basement storage space cleanup in South Building has resulted in 21,700 square feet of space being tentatively identified for release to GSA. This will result in over \$122,000 annual savings to USDA.
- ...Exerting pressure on GSA to move EPA and HEW out of USDA complex. Labor slated to move from Auditors Building July 31, 1976. Remodeling Cotton Annex warehouse space into office space beginning September 1976. These actions will increase our space inventory by approximately 55,000 square feet.
- ...Expect final decision by GSA on our request for 150,000 square feet of office space at Buzzards Point by August 5, 1976.
(Contact: Bill Hamilton, 00, ext. 73141)

GSA LEASE INFORMATION.....As a result of USDA efforts, GSA will furnish agencies requesting space with copies of bid documents and lease terms. Offices in GSA-leased space will now be directly aware of services and other lease requirements to be furnished by the lessors. (Contact: Bill Roth, 00, ext. 75225)

DEPARTMENT ELIMINATES 14 PERCENT OF PUBLIC-USE REPORTS.....Since October 31, 1975, a total of 119 reports have been eliminated. Agency results are as follows:

Agency	October 31, 1975			June 30, 1976		
	Repetitive	Single-time	Total	Repetitive	Single-time	Total
ARS	18	2	20	10	3	13
ASCS	136	1	137	114	2	116
APHIS	70	1	71	70	0	70
AMS	98	2	100	87	0	87
ERS	14	10	24	15	7	22
FCS	7	7	14	7	3	10
FmHA	43	1	44	39	0	39
FCIC	7	0	7	7	0	7
ES	2	3	5	2	0	2
FNS	84	7	91	73	3	76
FAS	10	0	10	4	0	4
FS	39	16	55	33	10	43
P&SA	16	0	16	13	0	13
REA	65	0	65	58	0	58
SCS	21	0	21	18	0	18
SRS	157	5	162	143	3	146
OTHER	7	0	7	6	0	6
TOTAL	794	55	849	699	31	730

(Contact: Richard P. Small, SRS, ext. 76201)

FAIR HOUSING.....The Secretary has signed an Interagency Agreement with Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Carla Hills, pledging mutual cooperation between the two departments in furthering the purposes of fair housing. Actions covered include fair housing for Federal employees, community impact in the location of Federal offices and the positive use of program funds to promote equal access to housing. Secretary's Memorandum 1662, Supplement 7, implements the agreement and establishes a fair housing program in USDA. The Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, is designated the USDA Fair Housing Officer. (Contact: J. Fred King, OE0, ext. 74256)

FOOD STAMP LEGISLATION.....Deliberations on H.R. 13613 will continue during the weeks of July 19 and 26. Members of the House Agriculture Committee have agreed to try to report legislation before the first of August, but there are differences of opinion on all portions of the bill. (Contact: Al Duran, OMF, ext. 74654)

APPEARANCES ON THE HILL.....According to the USDA Congressional Liaison Office, USDA officials have made over 525 appearances on Capitol Hill since the start of the 94th Congress. Are we heading for a new record?

WGI ACTION PLANS.....Plans have been received from ES, ARS and ADS. Plans from the other agencies are due in OP by July 30. (Contact: Bill Parent, OP, ext. 78721)

AWARD NOMINATIONS.....Nominations for external awards are due in the Office of Personnel as follows:

- ...Paperwork Management Award sponsored by the Association of Records Managers and Administrators and the National Archives and Records Service, GSA, due by July 29.
- ...Career Service and Special Achievement Awards sponsored by the National Civil Service League due by August 3. (Contact: Mae Paulsen, OP, ext. 75618)

SECURITY UPDATE.....After 2 months of the new security system, thefts are down by over 60%.

<u>Incident</u>	<u>Monthly Average</u>		<u>Actual</u>	
	<u>May 75 thru</u>	<u>April 76</u>	<u>June 76</u>	
	<u>South</u>	<u>Admin.</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Admin.</u>
	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>	<u>Bldg.</u>
Thefts of Government Property	15	2	10	-
Thefts of Personal Property	21	3	4	2
Acts of Vandalism	7	1	1	1
Assaults	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	44	6	15	3

Items stolen include desk calculators, hand calculators, tape recorders, and typewriters. It is worth noting that only typewriters not bolted to the desks are being stolen.

Employees charged with responsibility for equipment such as calculators and tape recorders should make certain that these items are locked up when unattended. (Contact: Carl Tant, OI, ext. 76001)

1976 YEARBOOK OF AGRICULTURE.....USDA's first photographic Yearbook of Agriculture was publicly released on July 21. The picture book, with 335 photographs on 288 pages, shows how farmers and rural Americans work and live in 1976. This is the Department's major Bicentennial project. (Contact: Jack Hayes, COMM, ext. 73298)

U.S. BICENTENNIAL EXPOSITION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.....The USDA is well represented at the Bicentennial Exposition in Cape Canaveral, Florida and the USDA pavilion has received considerable praise from visitors and the media. Approximately 200,000 people have visited the exposition and 60-70% of these visitors get to the USDA pavilion. (Contact: David Sutton, COMM, ext. 76641)

PRESIDENT SIGNS FOOD STAMP VENDOR BILL.....The President has signed the Emergency Food Stamp Vendor bill, which, he said, is designed "to eliminate the widely publicized coupon vendor abuses." The legislation will help insure that cash collected on food stamp sales is deposited promptly; provide criminal penalties for certain violations and reduce program costs by eliminating loss of interest due to late deposits of collections. (Contact: Al Duran, OMF, ext. 74654)

WARREN A. BLIGHT RETIRES.....Warren A. Blight, Deputy Director, Budget, OMF, retired effective July 2. No replacement has been named. Recruitment is underway.

USDA DINING FACILITIES.....There is a continuing problem with trays and dishes disappearing from the cafeteria. GSI has recently ordered 90 dozen trays at a cost of \$2,700 to replace those lost. In addition, \$4,100 was spent for other replacement items. These costs will eventually show up in cafeteria food prices we all pay.

The big eaters seem to be going to the buffet in the Administration Building, especially on chicken day. GSI figures show consumption averaging 10 cases of chicken for every 100 people at the buffet and 18 cases for every 600 people in the cafeteria.

USDA BOND DRIVE A SUCCESS.....USDA reached the goal of 75% employee participation in the 1976 Savings Bond Drive which closed at the end of May.